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Sen. Hammerstrom continues to keep children safe

February 17, 2004 -- The state Senate passed legislation that continues its commitment to protecting Michigan's children today, Sen. Beverly Hammerstrom, (R-Temperance), announced.

Hammerstrom, a long-time advocate for children's issues, sponsored Senate Bill 882 which requires all children under the age of four to be positioned in a child restraint system in the back seat of a vehicle, if the vehicle were equipped with such a seat. The bill also removes a provision that currently exempts nursing children from being secured in child restraint systems.

Hammerstrom began working to remove the nursing child exemption after learning of a woman charged with child endangerment for breast-feeding her 7-month old baby while driving along the Ohio Turnpike last year.

The woman claimed that because her car had a Michigan license plate, she was entitled to nurse her child while driving because the state currently exempts nursing children from its child restraint laws. The woman also believed that her child was never in any danger.

"Anytime a child is not secured in an appropriate restraint system, there is a potential for danger to that child," Hammerstrom said. "As a mother, I understand there are times when a child is hungry and needs to be fed, no matter what else is going on. Taking the time to stop your vehicle, either at a rest area or other safe location, before removing the child from its safety seat could prevent serious injury or even death."

(More)

Motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of accidental death for children aged 0-15, according to the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning. In 2002, 49 child passengers aged 0-15 died and 7,232 were injured in traffic crashes in Michigan.

“Studies have shown that children are especially vulnerable in traffic accidents,” Hammerstrom said. “By providing these protections for children, we are working to prevent families from horrible tragedy.”

SB 882 now heads to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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